

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6115

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10781

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: RSFSR SUPREME SOVIET SESSION: BREZHNEV'S HEALTH,
LEADERSHIP, TIDBITS

1. OPENING RSFSR SUPREME SOVIET SESSION JULY 8 PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE BREZHNEV IN PERSON, BUT AT DISTANCE OF SOME 30 YARDS. AS USUAL, BREZHNEV WALKED ON THE DAIS AHEAD OF OTHER PARTY LEADERS. HIS COLOR WAS GOOD, AND HE GAVE EVERY IMPRESSION OF BEING IN GOOD HEALTH. WE DETECTED NO EVIDENCE OF FACIAL SWELLING OR ANY OTHER MEDICAL PROBLEM. SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE MEETING HE TWISTED AROUND AND HELD WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN A PHYSICALLY AWKWARD POSITION TO TALK FOR SEVERAL MINUTES WITH GROMYKO, SEATED DIRECTLY BEHIND BREZHNEV.

2. MEETING, WHICH OTHERWISE WAS THOROUGHLY BORING, ALSO PROVIDED AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE LEADERSHIP SORTS ITSELF OUT FOR PURPOSES OF SEATING ORDER. THE FRONT ROW OF THE LEADERSHIP SECTION WAS OCCUPIED BY SENIOR POLITBURO MEMBERS KIRILENKO, PODGORNYY AND BREZHNEV, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE TWO EMPTY SEATS TO KIRILENKO'S RIGHT. THE NEXT ROW CONTAINED FULL POLITBURO MEMBERS USTINOV, PEL'SHE, GRISHIN, ANDROPOV, AND GROMYKO. THE FINAL ROW WAS OCCUPIED BY ZIMYANIN, CHERNENKO, KAPITONOV, PONOMAREV, AND SOLOMENTSEV.

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3. THUS, THE PECKING ORDER FOR THIS EVENT WAS BREZHNEV,

PODGORNY, KIRILENKO, GROMYKO, ANDROPOV, GRISHIN, PEL'SHE,
USTINOV, SOLOMENTSEV, PONOMAREV, KAPITONOV, CHERNENKO,
AND ZIMYANIN.

4. ONE OTHER ITEM IN THE TIDBIT DEPARTMENT: WHILE MOST
OF THE LEADERSHIP WAS WORKING WITH PAPERS, DURING THE
SPEECHES, ANDROPOV SEEMED TO ENJOY AN ANIMATED CONVERSA-
TION WITH GROMYKO WHICH LASTED, OFF AND ON, THROUGHOUT
THE TWO-HOUR SESSION.
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